DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 171 854 UD 019 508

TITLE	The Tutoring and Dropout Prevention Program at Boys and Girls High School.
INSTITUTION	Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corp., Brooklyn, N.Y.
PUB DATE	Dec 76
NOTE	15p.; Pages (including Appendices) have been deleted due to poor reproduction quality of the original document
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Dropout Prevention; *Educational Improvement; Educational Objectives; *Educational Programs; Educational Strategies; Program Costs; *Remedial Programs; Secondary Education; *Tutorial Programs
IDENTIFIERS	*Boys And Girls High School; *New York (Brooklyn)

ABSTRACT

In this project report problems with the tutoring program, objectives of the program and strategies employed by the program to deal with the problems are outlined. The school, Boys and Girls High School, its environment, and the program's sponsor, the Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation, Brooklyn, are described briefly. Results of the program's efforts and the implications of these results are summarized. Statements of the program's plans for the future and its costs for the 1975-76 academic year are provided. (EB)

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THE BEDFORD STUYVESANT RESTORATION CORPORATION

THE TUTORING AND DROPOUT PREVENTION PROGRAM AT BOYS AND GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL

A REPORT TO THE FAN FOX AND LESLIE R. SAMUELS FOUNDATION ON THE OPERATION AND RESULTS OF THE TUTORING AND DROPOUT PREVENTION PROGRAM SEPTEMBER, 1975 THROUGH AUGUST, 1976

DECEMBER 1976

U S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following have participated in the development and implementation of the Tutoring and Dropout Prevention Program at Boys and Girls High School

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SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The Tutoring and Dropout Prevention Program was designed by faculty and students at Boys and Girls High School in cooperation with staff of the Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation to (1) increase reading skills of reading-deficient students and to (2) decrease chronic absenteeism. Tutoring was to be performed by College-Bound seniors at Boys and Girls High School. Dropout prevention was to be accomplished by a college student hired part-time to counsel students and to visit the homes of students who showed a disturbing pattern of absences.

During the 1975-76 school year, the reading achievement levels and absentee patterns of the two classes that participated in the program were compared with remedial reading classes that did not participate.

FIRST SEMESTER: SEPTEMBER 1975-JANUARY 1976

In the first semester, the program was not fully operable. High School tutors could not participate because of their need to prepare for Regents Exams and College Boards. However, a part-time college student was hired to counsel and visit homes. The results of the first semester appear in Table I, p.6. The two classes of the Program (labelled PAL, for Peer-Assisted Learning) show an average reading level improvement of .1 to .5 better than comparable remedial reading classes.* This was a positive result, but we expected to show more improvement when the Program would become fully operable. During this first semester the attendance and absentee rates of the PAL classes were not markedly better than the comparable classes.

SECOND SEMESTER: JANUARY 1976-JUNE 1976

The second semester began with ten tutors, and a new college student was hired to counsel students and to visit homes. The results of the second semester appear in Table II, p. 8. The two PAL classes, plus an additional group of eleven seniors added to the Program, show a marked average reading level improvement; the PAL classes averaged .6 better than the ten non-PAL remedial reading classes.* PAL'S positive reading results were approximately twice as good as the first semester. In the other categories such as percent of students measured (i.e., present for both pre and post test) and percent attending more than 75% of the classes, the PAL classes generally did much better than the comparable remedial reading classes.

At this stage of our study we can say that the program, when properly functioning, evidences dramatic improvement in reading and attendance of the majority of participating students.

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* A .1 to .5 average improvement in reading is roughly equivalent to averaging a one to four month gain in reading skills as measured by the Metropolitan Achievement Test, used in the city's public schools. If the gain is 1.4, the improvement is one year and 4 months. An average student is expected to gain .1 each month of the ten-month school year.

THE TUTORING AND DROPOUT PREVENTION PROGRAM AT BOYS AND GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL

A. Statement of the Problem

The educational system is not functioning properly in Bedford Stuyvesant and similar urban areas. Recent incoming freshmen classes at Boys and Girls High School have had as much as 25 percent reading below the fourth grade level and 85 percent reading two or more years below grade level. The dropout rate is more difficult to assess, but one recent study of New York City schools in general asserted that less than 50 percent of public high school students graduated. (See appendix 4.) These two serious problems, inadequate reading skills and dropping out, seemed to us to be related to one another and capable of solution.

B. The Proposal

We believed if we could show that the twin problems of inadequate reading skills and excessive absenteeism were capable of solution in one urban high school, then we could lead the way to educational improvement in Bedford Stuyvesant and similar areas.

To improve reading skills, we proposed that the better student readers from the senior classes assist the less skilled students. To attack excessive absenteeism a college student was hired part-time to be in the classroom to counsel and help tutor, and to do home visiting of students who showed an excessive pattern of absences. This college student would also serve as a higher education role model and accompany the students on occasional class trips, geared to encourage career development and to stimulate cultural enrichment.

A $10,000 grant from the Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation enabled the Boys and Girls High School Tutoring and Dropout Prevention Program to be implemented and evaluated over the 1975-76 academic year. This is a report on the results of the Program from September 1975 through August 1976.

C. Questions to be Answered

1. Will the reading levels and excessive absenteeism or dropout rates of the two PAL classes show a marked improvement over comparable remedial reading classes?

2. In testing the hypothesis described above, what else can we learn about the students, their teachers, the learning process and the school?

D. The School and its Environment

As the only academic high school in the Bedford Stuyvesant area, Boys and Girls High School has had a rich and varied reputation over its 85-year history. From 1891 until 1975, the school was known as Boys High and located in a landmark building on the corner of Marcy Avenue and Putnam Avenue. Then in 1975, the school invited young women to join its student body and its name was changed accordingly. In February of 1976, the school moved to its present site in a beautifully appointed complex of modern buildings about a mile away at Fulton Street and Stuyvesant Avenue. Country-wide Boys High had been known for its outstanding academic and athletic accomplishments. Today it is the athletic reputation that still stands.

The school serves a minority population of approximately 3800 Black and Puerto Rican Students, and as in so many of the schools in low socio-economic areas, the school is fighting one of the most stubborn problems of the school system-- the inability of students to acquire reading skills sufficient to ensure growth in the continuing process of education. Boys and Girls High, under the leadership of its principal, Delius Wilson, is resolved to conquer the reading problem and to regain its reputation for academic excellence. The Tutoring and Dropout Prevention Program is one sound step in the direction of problem solving in urban education.

E. The Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation

The Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation is a non-profit community development institution that has as its goal the renewal and development of Bedford Stuyvesant, a community of some 400,000 persons living in Central Brooklyn, The Corporation is active in housing, land development, job development, economic development and improving public services such as health and education. Restoration is funded by a Special Impact Program grant from the Federal Community Services Administration, foundation grants and other contributions. The Tutoring and Dropout Prevention Program was developed in cooperation with principal, faculty and students of Boys and Girls High School as part of the Corporation's educational outreach. Funding was made possible through a grant from the Samuels Foundation.

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

A. Subjects

Boys and Girls High School is a four-year comprehensive high school. Each of its 3800 students is to be prepared for further academic study in college, and upon graduation, is also expected to have a marketable skill. Those students who are two or more years below grade level are randomly programmed by the computer for remedial reading classes. During the 1975-76 academic year, there were 40 remedial reading classes with approximately 1400 students. Each remedial reading teacher was assigned five classes. The two subject PAL classes were randomly chosen from one teacher's cluster of five classes. In other words, the two subject classes were typical of the 1400 remedial readers at Boys and Girls High School.

During the first semester, September 1975 through January 1976, there were 75 remedial reading students originally registered in the two PAL classes. (See Table I). In the second semester effort was made to continue as many as possible of the first semester students into the two PAL classes of the second semester. Table II indicates 42 students on the register of the two PAL classes,* plus 11 remedial reading seniors and 10 tutors, for a total of 63 students whose reading test scores and absentee rates were to be compared with random samplings of other remedial reading classes.

* In February 1976, all reading classes school-wide were reduced in size to more strictly conform to Board of Education requirements.

B. Treatment

By the second semester when the program was fully functioning, the PAL classes were characterized by the following:

1. Lecturing in the traditional classroom manner was kept at a minimum, mainly for making announcements and changes in class routine.

2. Students worked with fellow student tutors from junior and senior classes on their own individualized learning plans to build up reading skills deficiencies, as noted in each student's individual progress file.

3. Reading materials especially chosen by the students were purchased with program money and made available to students in addition to regular curriculum materials.

4. A college student was assigned to work full-time in the classroom both tutoring and counseling. Where students showed a disturbing pattern of absences, the college student made a home visit to enlist the cooperation and support of parents.

5. High school tutors were exposed to an on-going structured training program to upgrade their tutoring skills and to sustain their motivation and enthusiasm.

6. Periodic trips were arranged to (a) expose the students to the beauties and wonders of the City, and (b) to stimulate career awareness. Trip destinations included the World Trade Center, Southstreet Seaport, The Empire State Building, Battery Park, Wall Street, Trinity Church, Black National Network and a variety of museums.

7. Special guests were invited to speak to the class, such as Adrienne Sealy, teenage author of And Even a Child Shall Lead Them.

8. Restoration Neighborhood Center staff visited the class from time to time to assist in tutoring or arrange for trips.

9. Special orientation on the meaning of the program was given at the beginning of the semester; progress and excellence awards were given at the end of the semester.

C. Instruments

In Tables I and II, all student progress was measured by the Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT). In September 1975, Intermediate Form G; in January 1976, Form IIA; in June 1976, Form IIIA.

In Table II, tutors were given the California Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) in January 1976 and June 1976.

In addition, students and tutors were asked to write out their personal evaluations and criticisms of PAL. See Appendix 1 and 2.

D. Methodology

In comparing the PAL classes with parallel remedial reading classes, Tables I and II, there was no ability grouping in choosing classes for comparison. A student is programmed for the remedial reading classes if he or she is reading two or more years below grade level. Remedial reading students are programmed into classes at random. There are six remedial reading teachers; each teacher works with five remedial reading classes. One of the remedial reading teachers helped develop the Tutoring and Dropout Prevention Program and she chose her fifth and sixth period classes as PAL classes. In Table I, two classes of two other remedial reading teachers were chosen for comparison. The principal basis for selecting the comparable classes of teacher X and teacher Y, was the proximity of their classes in time, to periods 5 and 6 of the PAL teacher. This choice was based on the assumption that student alertness, performance and presence are related to the time of day that classes are held. For example, students are more inclined to cut classes that occur after the lunch period. Period 5 is 11:00 AM to 11:45 AM; period 6 is 11:50 AM to 12:35 PM.

Table II reports on the second semester when the program was in full operation. More classes of more remedial reading teachers were chosen for comparison during this period, including two non-PAL remedial classes of the PAL teacher-- again to further test the validity of the PAL approach, by comparing it with a broad sampling of other remedial reading classes.

RESULTS

A. Analysis of Table I* and Explanation of Results

Though the average improvement of the PAL classes is from .5 to .1 better than the comparable remedial reading classes, the PAL performance in the first semester is not highly significant. In effect it means that the PAL students averaged from one to five months more improvement in reading skills than the comparable remedial classes, as measured by the Metropolitan Achievement Test given in October 1975 and again in January 1976. (See the note on page 1.)

More students in the PAL classes were measured, that is, were present for both the pre and post tests in October and January. A greater percentage of the PAL students improved, but the degree of improvement is not that marked. The attendance rates of the PAL classes is not significantly different from the comparable remedial reading classes.

The unexceptional first semester performance of PAL can be attributed to the facts that (1) no high school tutors could participate during the first term (see page 1) and (2) the part-time college tutor hired to counsel and tutor students, and do home visiting, was erratic in performance and eventually resigned.

*See following page

TABLE I

TUTORING AND DROPOUT PREVENTION PROGRAM
TWO PAL (PEER-ASSISTED LEARNING) CLASSES COMPARED TO
PARALLEL REMEDIAL READING CLASSES
SEPTEMBER,1975 THROUGH JANUARY,1976

	CLASSES COMPARED					
	PAL 5th Per.	PAL 6th Per.	Tchr. X Per. 3	Tchr. Y Per. 5	Tchr. X Per. 6	Tchr. Y Per. 7
No. of Students on Register	37	38	38	29	38	37
No. of Students Measured 10/75 - 1/76	29	25	26	15	11	16
Percent of Students Measured	78%	66%	42%	52%	29%	43%
No. of (Measured) Students Improved	22	20	12	9	6	8
Percent Improved	76%	80%	75%	60%	55%	50%
Improved .4 or better	19	18	6	6	4	6
Percent Improved .4 or better	66%	72%	38%	40%	36%	38%
No. (Measured) Declined	7	4	4	5	4	5
Percent Declined	24%	16%	25%	33%	36%	31%
No Change	0	1	0	1	1	3
Untested or No Show/ Cannot Compare	8	13	22	14	27	21
Percent No Shows/ Untested	22%	34%	58%	48%	71%	57%
Excessive Absences *	12	19	11	14	16	25
Percent Excessive Absences	32%	50%	29%	48%	42%	68%
Never Showed (Drop)	7	7	4	10	8	8
Attendance 75% +	25	19	27	15	22	12
Percent Attendance 75% +	68%	50%	71%	52%	58%	32%
Highest grades (80%)	5	0	12	4	7	1
No. in between (65%-79%)	20	18	9	11	8	11
No. of Failures	12	20	17	14	23	25
Percent Failures	32%	53%	45%	48%	61%	68%
Average reading level of Class in: Jan. '76	5.7	5.6	5.9	5.8	5.5	5.8
Oct. '75	5.1	5.1	5.9	5.3	5.1	5.3
Average Improvement of Class	.6	.5	.4	.2	.2	.1

* More than 21 absences per term

B. Analysis of Table II and Explanation of Results

In the second semester, ten high school tutors were assigned to the PAL classes, a new college counselor-tutor was hired, and a former teacher was engaged part-time as a consultant to train the tutors. As Table II indicates, the results were dramatic.

During the five month period between the pre and post test, when improvement should have been approximately .5, the PAL classes, the tutors, and a group of ten seniors made from better-than-average to remarkable improvement. The five PAL columns show an improvement that ranges from 1.1 to .9. In a weighted average comparison with the non-PAL classes, PAL shows .6 better average reading improvement. (PAL had a .9 average improvement; non-PAL, .3) Of the ten comparable non-PAL classes, five recorded a decline, and even where there was improvement, the percentage of students measured was less, e.g., Section 24 with a .7 average improvement measured only 26% of the class register.

Performance of the comparable non-PAL classes was so uninspiring, that we included two additional non-PAL classes of the PAL teacher (teacher P) for comparison. Both of teacher P's classes showed improvement, and one class (Sec. 11) averaged .1 better than Sec. 2 PAL. One reason for this may have been that the PAL teacher requested the college counselor-tutor to visit homes of students in non-PAL classes and she also used PAL reading materials in her non-PAL classes. Certainly, the ability of the teacher must be a factor also. Note that teacher B's classes all show improvement. But Table II also indicates, by superior PAL class performance, that the Tutoring and Dropout Prevention Program must have had something to do with the better PAL results. In addition to a greater degree of average reading improvement, note:

--the percent of students measured is much higher in the PAL columns, indicating better student participation and more control over the class;

--the percent attendance 75% or better is significantly higher in the PAL columns.

WHAT THE PROGRAM DEMONSTRATES

1. The basic lesson learned: If students are given individualized attention on a one to one basis, they feel the importance of their own participation and contribution to the program, resulting in an enhancing of their self-concept, and they grow as persons and improve as readers.

2. Teachers who care, and young adults who are succeeding in college and who become models for the students to follow, are a plus in motivating the remedial students to improve.

3. The interest and concern shown by fellow students was a plus in building the self-image and improving the reading skills of the remedial students.

4. The positive experiences of the tutors accelerated their own reading improvement.

* See following page

TABLE II

TURNING AND DROPOUT PREVENTION PROGRAM
TWO PAL (PEER-ASSISTED LEARNING) CLASSES COMPARED TO
PARALLEL REMEDIAL READING CLASSES

JANUARY, 1976 THROUGH JUNE, 1976

	PAL SEC. 1 6TH PERIOD STUDENTS		PAL SEC. 2 7TH PERIOD STUDENTS		PAL 5TH PER. SENIORS	TEACHER Y SEC. 20 6TH PER. STUDENTS	TCHR. Y SEC. 25 7TH PER. STUDENTS	TCHR.A SEC. 5 2ND.PER. STUDENTS	TCHR. A SEC. 9 3RD PER. STUDENTS	TCHR. B SEC. 19 6TH PER. STUDENTS	TCHR. B SEC. 24 7TH PER. STUDENTS	TCHR. B SEC. 3 1ST. PER. STUDENTS	TCHR. C SEC. 4 1ST. PER. STUDENTS	TCHR. P SEC. 2 1ST. PER. STUDENTS	TCHR. P SEC. 11 2ND. PER. STUDENTS
No. of Students on Register	18	6	24	4	11	25	24	27	24	17	27	26	21	25	21
No. of Students Measured 1/76-6/76	17	6	19	4	10	10	9	21	9	11	7	18	14	16	15
Percent of Students Measured	94%	100%	79%	100%	91%	40%	38%	78%	38%	65%	26%	69%	67%	64%	71%
No. of (Measured) Students Improved	15	4	15	2	9	4	5	7	3	5	4	13	7	11	13
Percent Improved	88%	67%	79%	50%	90%	40%	56%	33%	33%	45%	57%	72%	50%	69%	87%
No. Improved .5 or Better	11	3	12	2	7	4	4	6	1	5	4	9	3	8	11
Percent Improved .5 or Better	65%	50%	63%	50%	70%	40%	44%	29%	11%	45%	57%	50%	21%	50%	73%
No. (Measured) Declined	2	0	3	0	0	4	4	13	5	5	3	5	6	5	2
Percent Declined	12%	0	16%	0	0	40%	44%	62%	56%	45%	43%	28%	43%	31%	13%
No. Change	0	2	1	2	1	2	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0
Untested or No Show/Cannot Compare	1	0	5	0	1	15	15	6	17	6	20	8	7	9	6
Percent No Shows/Untested	6%	0	21%	0	9%	60%	62%	22%	62%	35%	74%	31%	33%	36%	29%
Excessive Absences *	4	0	5	1	1	8	9	1	4	4	6	6	3	9	5
Percent Excessive Absences	22%	0	21%	25%	9%	32%	38%	3%	17%	24%	22%	23%	14%	36%	24%
Never Showed (Drop)	2	0	1	0	0	6	8	4	2	8	4	3	6	5	3
Attendance 75% +	14	6	19	3	10	17	15	18	15	9	13	16	6	13	15
Percent Attendance 75% +	78%	100%	79%	75%	90%	68%	63%	67%	63%	53%	48%	62%	29%	52%	71%
Highest Grades (80%)	0	5	0	2	0	2	6	9	5	9	5	13	3	1	1
No. in Between (65%-79%)	14	1	18	1	10	15	9	17	15	4	16	7	15	15	15
No. of Failures	4	0	6	1	1	8	9	1	4	4	6	6	3	9	5
Percent Failures	22%	0	25%	25%	9%	32%	38%	4%	17	24%	22%	23%	14%	36%	24%
Average Reading Level : of all Tested - June '76	6.9^{17}**	13.4^{6}	5.9^{21}	13.0^{4}	6.9^{10}	5.9^{11}	6.4^{14}	5.1^{22}	5.6^{17}	6.5^{12}	6.3^{15}	5.7^{21}	5.1^{15}	6.0^{18}	5.8^{19}
of all Tested - January '76	5.9^{17}**	12.4^{6}	5.5^{21}	12.2^{4}	5.7^{10}	6.3^{11}	6.2^{13}	5.2^{22}	5.5^{11}	6.0^{12}	5.7^{9}	5.4^{22}	5.5^{18}	5.6^{21}	4.8^{17}
Average Improvement or Decline of Those Having Both Pretest Scores in Jan. and Post-Test Scores in June	1.0^{17}**	1.0^{6}	$.7^{19}$	$.9^{4}$	1.1^{10}	$(-.3)^{10}$	$(-.2)^{9}$	$(-.1)^{21}$	$(-.3)^{9}$	$.3^{11}$	$.7^{7}$	$.3^{18}$	$(-.3)^{14}$	$.4^{16}$	$.8^{15}$

*MORE THAN 21 ABSENCES PER TERM

**NUMBER TESTED IN THE CLASS

5. Career orientation of the classes was a plus in motivating the students to improve.

6. The primary cause of reading deficiency is not so much a function of the student, or his home, or his poverty, but rather a function of educational approach.

To verify these conclusions read the student's and tutors' comments in Appendix 1 and 2.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

To repeat the program during the 1976-77 academic year with the following additional goals:

1. To expand the Tutoring and Dropout Prevention Program approach to include more remedial reading classes and other subject areas such as math, English and history;

2. To increase the number of participating tutors, so that there can be more individualization;

3. To evaluate and measure student improvement in other subject areas besides reading;

4. To include parent involvement in the program.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

On July 23, 1975, $10,000 was transmitted to the Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation from the Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation to support the Tutoring and Dropout Prevention Program at Boys and Girls High School during the 1975-76 academic year. The Financial Statement for this first year of the Program follows, reporting expenditures from September 1975 through August 1976.

TUTORING AND DROPOUT PREVENTION PROGRAM

FINANCIAL STATEMENT
SEPTEMBER, 1975 THROUGH AUGUST, 1976

EXPENDITURES		
Stipend for Tutor Counselor(s)		$1,998.75
Paperback Library and Books		405.43
Magazines		67.00
Education Materials		75.68
Field Trips		632.55
Miscellaneous		124.11
	TOTAL:	$3,303.52
INCOME		
Foundation Support		$10,000.00
Carry-over to continue and expand the program for 1976-77		$ 6,696.48

Submitted by:

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Director
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Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation